



Organizing Support Groups



You might want to organize support groups in your community for people dealing with stress. To help organize a good meeting, you'll need to consider the following:

- Agenda
- Arrangements
- Name Tags
- Refreshments
- Handouts

“Prepare an outline before the first meeting of what will be said and done.”

Agenda

To launch a successful first meeting, an outline of what will be said and done, with the order of what will happen, must be prepared beforehand. If possible, provide photocopies of the agenda for the participants. Your meeting might follow an agenda similar to the one below.

- Welcome.
- Briefly explain who you are and the meeting's purpose.
- Discuss your role as organizer, and review what you've done to date.
- Share your experience, concern, fear, frustration or ideas as they relate to the meeting's purpose. Encourage others to do so as well, but don't force anyone to talk who doesn't want to.
- Suggest an exchange of telephone numbers.
- Allow time for a question-and-answer period.
- Establish a definite time for a next meeting. Make sure everyone has your name and number, and before parting remind them again of the next meeting.
- Ask if anyone has anything to say.
- Thank everyone for attending.

This document is IFAS publication DH 2005.

Adapted by UF/IFAS from:
*Stress and Coping With
Disaster: A Handbook
Compiled Following the
Midwest Flood of 1993 for
Extension Professionals*,
compiled by Marty Baker
and Ami O'Neill

“Printed handouts are important for your first meeting because they give participants something to take home and think about before your next meeting.”

Arrangements

If you're leading the group, don't sit behind a desk or podium—it can make people less willing to talk. If possible, arrange chairs in a circle or around a table.

Name Tags

Make sure they're available, but make them optional. Some people might want to take some time before deciding whether they're actually a part of the group, so don't ask people to wear name tags if they seem reluctant.

Refreshments

Coffee, tea, soft drinks and finger foods help set a more social mood, so you might want to have some on hand. Beer and wine are usually not appropriate for a first meeting.

Handouts

Printed handouts are an important aspect of your first meeting because they give participants something to take home and think about before your next meeting. For your first meeting, you might want to put together a simple handout on the importance of mutual support groups.